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Heredity. By J. ARTHUR THOMPSON, Regius Professor of Natural History in the University of Aberdeen. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908. Pp. xvi, 605. \$3.50.)

This is a work of which sociologists should take note. Though a work in general biology, it contains so many explicit references to social matters that it is indispensable for those interested in the biological aspects of social problems. The last chapter of the book is, indeed, devoted to a general discussion of the relations of biology and sociology, in which Professor Thompson makes a number of valuable suggestions for sociological theory, showing at the same time that he fully appreciates the difficulties of transferring biological formulæ to sociology. "The fallacy of regarding sociology as no more than a recondite branch of biology," he says, "is not merely verbal; it involves a misconception of what human society is, a misconception which is discredited by the facts of history and experience" (p. 510). Biological formulæ, therefore, Professor Thompson concludes, if they are to be used in sociology, "must be reverified and precisely tested."

It is not, however, the last chapter only which is of interest to sociologists and to practical social workers, but the whole book. The reviewer knows of no other work in the whole range of biological literature which contains such a clear presentation of the theory of heredity together with the consideration of related biological facts, such as variation, acquired modifications, and evolution by selection. The fundamental importance of heredity, in the sense of the transmission of potential qualities by the germ cells from generation to generation, in the world of life, and especially among human beings, is shown at every step. The qualities which may be thus inherited are not only physical, but psychical as well. Buckle's contention that psychical qualities are not inherited, and that, therefore, "race" is a meaningless term in explaining the mental and social peculiarities of peoples, is effectually disposed of. The qualities which are transmitted, however, are not those acquired by the individual parent during his lifetime, but rather those of the stock or race to which he belongs, plus certain variations which arise in the germ plasm from causes as yet only partly known.

Thus on the vexed question of the inheritance of "acquired

characters" Professor Thompson takes the side of Weismann. But much of the difference of opinion on this question, he shows, has been due to misunderstandings. An "acquired character," in Weismann's use of the phrase, is "a structural change in the body, induced by some change in use or disuse, or by a change in surrounding influence." In other words, it is a somatic modification acquired by the individual during his lifetime; and of the definite, specific transmission of such modifications we have as yet no satisfactory evidence, though there is plenty of evidence to show that changes in nutrition, and the like, may affect the germ cells, and so the vitality of the offspring, without the transmission of any specific modification as such.

The social and human emphasis which Professor Thompson gives to all of his discussions cannot be better illustrated than by quoting his conclusion on this matter of the inheritance of acquired characters (p. 249). "If there is little or no scientific warrant for our being other than extremely skeptical at present as to the inheritance of acquired characters—or better, the transmission of modifications—this skepticism lends greater importance than ever, on the one hand, to a good nature, to secure which is the business of careful mating; and, on the other hand, to a good nurture, to secure which for our children is one of our most obvious and binding duties: the hopefulness of the task resting especially upon the fact that, unlike the beasts that perish, man has a lasting external heritage, capable of endless modification for the better, a heritage of ideas and ideals, embodied in prose and verse, in statue and painting, in cathedral and university, in tradition and convention, and above all in society itself."

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Climate—Considered Especially in Relation to Man. By ROBERT DE COURCY WARD, Assistant Professor of Climatology in Harvard University. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908. Pp. xv, 372. \$2.).

Students of the social sciences will find in this book no new material or theories on the relations of man to his physical environment. The chapters dealing with man are, for the most part, as the author